

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Previously Presented) A ball-and-socket joint, comprising:
 - a housing;
 - a bearing shell inserted into said housing;
 - a ball pivot with a joint ball mounted pivotally in all directions in said bearing shell;
 - a sealing bellows between the housing and the ball pivot, said sealing bellows having a pivot-side edge area;
 - a ball race fixed on said ball pivot; and
 - a sliding ring receiving said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows, said sliding ring being mounted to slide in said ball race, said sliding ring having a sliding surface facing the joint ball arranged adjacent to the ball race, wherein said ball race has a leg which is in contact with said sliding ring, said leg comprising lugs arranged at spaced locations from one another.
2. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:
 - said sliding ring includes a collar made in one piece with said sliding ring.
3. (Withdrawn) A joint in accordance with claim 2, wherein:
 - said collar engages said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows.
4. (Withdrawn) A joint in accordance with claim 2, wherein:

said collar is made in one piece with an inner side of said sliding ring, said sliding ring cooperates with said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows in at least some areas.

5. (Original) A joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said sliding ring includes an axial extension and a radial extension.

6. (Withdrawn) A joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said race and said sliding ring define a gap between said race and said sliding ring.

7. (Withdrawn) A joint in accordance with claim 5, wherein:

said race and said sliding ring define a gap between said axial extension and a surface of said ball race.

8. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 7, wherein:

said sliding ring has an approximately L-shaped cross section comprising an axial leg as said axial extension and a radial leg as said radial extension, said radial leg is in sliding contact with an inner surface of said ball race.

9. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said ball race has an approximately U-shaped cross section.

10. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said sealing bellows has a surface slidingly in contact with a surface of said ball race.

11. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 10, wherein:

said surface of said sealing bellows which is in contact with said surface of said ball race has a sealing lip in contact with said surface of said ball race.

12. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 10, wherein:

said surface of said sealing bellows which is in contact with said surface of said ball race forms a labyrinth seal together with said surface of said ball race.

13. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 10, wherein:

said surface of said sealing bellows which is in contact with said surface of said ball race has a sealing lip and a second surface of said sealing bellows forms a labyrinth seal together with said surface of said ball race.

14. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 5, wherein:

said sliding ring is a shaped sheet metal part or a plastic molding;

said sliding ring receives and holds a portion of said sealing bellows between said radial and axial extensions;

said radial and axial extensions are substantially perpendicular to each other;

said ball race is fixed to said ball pivot.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said sliding ring has at least one radially extending slot.

17. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows forms a thickened material bead,
which is pressed against said ball race or said sliding ring with an elastic pretension.

18. (Withdrawn) A joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said sliding ring has a disk shape.

19. (Withdrawn) A joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said sliding ring is slotted.

20. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said sliding ring has an approximately L shaped cross section.

21. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said sliding ring has an approximately T shaped cross section.

22. (Withdrawn) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said sliding ring has an approximately F shaped cross section.

23. (Original) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein:

said sliding ring is vulcanized directly to said pivot-side edge area of said sealing bellows.

24 -27 (Canceled)

28. (New) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein said lugs are in direct contact with said sliding ring.

29. (New) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein each of said lugs include free ends facing away from said ball pivot in a radial direction.

30. (New) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 1, wherein said sliding ring has an L-shaped cross section comprising an axial leg and a radial leg, said radial leg being in sliding contact with the inner surface of said ball race.

31. (New) A ball-and-socket joint in accordance with claim 30, wherein said radial leg is arranged between said sealing bellows and said lugs.